

A STATENAME CHAIN

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Often, while searching through atlases and gazetteers of the United States, we have been surprised at the number of communities which possess names identical with various states. For example, there is a town called OREGON in Holt County, Missouri, and there is a MAINE in Davie County, North Carolina. We felt that here was a logological phenomenon worth investigating further. So, we turned to the 1967 edition of the Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide. This is a listing of about 115,000 place names the length and breadth of the United States. A complete examination of this one work alone revealed just over two hundred instances of a community bearing the same name as one of the fifty states. Omitted from our list were variant spellings, such as ARKANSAW (in Pepin County, Wisconsin), and supplemented names, such as IDAHO SPRINGS (in Clear Creek County, Colorado) and ILLINOIS CAMP (in Eddy County, New Mexico).

Not surprisingly, the most frequent community name on our list was WASHINGTON. But the two runners-up, WYOMING and DELAWARE, did seem somewhat unexpected to us. Our list of 200-plus names can be much expanded by reference to other detailed atlases published over the past seventy years or so.

As an interesting sidetrack we note that a number of other countries possess towns which bear American statenames. Argentina, for example, boasts an ARIZONA; Liberia and South-West Africa both have a KENTUCKY; Australia also has a KENTUCKY, as well as a NEW MEXICO and a TENNESSEE. The British Isles possess at least ten CALIFORNIA's, a FLORIDA, a MAINE, a MARYLAND, at least four NEW YORK's, a PENNSYLVANIA, a VERMONT, a VIRGINIA and at least three WASHINGTON's.

However, there is no great value in just compiling what could turn out to be an endless list of such towns in the United States. It was Dmitri Borgmann's idea that we use our list to construct a statename chain. In a statename chain, one has to construct a chain as long as possible reading: community A is in state B; community

B is in state C; community C is in state D; and so on. It is desirable that no name should occur twice as a community name or twice as a statename. The upper limit length to such a chain is fifty links, because there are fifty states. In reality, though, this figure cannot be closely approached. This derives from difficulties in finding communities with names such as NEW JERSEY, NEW MEXICO, NORTH DAKOTA and SOUTH CAROLINA. Even so, the fact that we have found a NEW HAMPSHIRE (in Auglaize County, Ohio) and a WEST VIRGINIA (in St. Louis County, Minnesota) does not mean that NEW JERSEY, et al., cannot be found. Can the reader find some more of these unlikely names?

From our pool of two hundred or so names, plus a few more sent to us by Dmitri Borgmann, we have managed to construct a chain of twenty-two links:

WYOMING is in Kent County, DELAWARE
 DELAWARE is in Southampton County, VIRGINIA
 VIRGINIA is in Kitsap County, WASHINGTON
 WASHINGTON is in Wood County, WEST VIRGINIA
 WEST VIRGINIA is in St. Louis County, MINNESOTA
 MINNESOTA is in Colquitt County, GEORGIA
 GEORGIA is in Lamar County, TEXAS
 TEXAS is in Wayne County, PENNSYLVANIA
 PENNSYLVANIA is in Mobile County, ALABAMA
 ALABAMA is in Genesee County, NEW YORK
 NEW YORK is in Santa Rosa County, FLORIDA
 FLORIDA is in Houghton County, MICHIGAN
 MICHIGAN is in Osage County, KANSAS
 KANSAS is in Seneca County, OHIO
 OHIO is in Gunnison County, COLORADO
 COLORADO is in Imperial County, CALIFORNIA
 CALIFORNIA is in Saint Marys County, MARYLAND
 MARYLAND is in Saint Mary County, LOUISIANA
 LOUISIANA is in Pike County, MISSOURI
 MISSOURI is in Brown County, ILLINOIS
 ILLINOIS is in Lake County, INDIANA
 INDIANA is in Arkansas County, ARKANSAS

The town of Illinois in Indiana we find listed in the 1903 edition of Cram's New Modern Unrivalled Indexed Atlas of the World, edited by George F. Cram with the assistance of Eugene Murray-Aaron, and published by George F. Cram, New York and Chicago.

Can any reader improve on our chain? We certainly think that the American reader ought to be able to lengthen it to 25 links, as he has far more sources available to him than we had.